

# WARM-UP ACTIVITIES IN READING LESSONS TO INCREASE THE INTEREST IN LEARNING OF NON-ENGLISH MAJORED FRESHMEN AT HAIPHONG UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the effectiveness of warm-up activities in reading lessons to enhance the interest and engagement in learning of non-English majored freshmen at Haiphong University. The research aims to address the challenges faced by instructors in motivating students who do not specialize in language studies, thereby improve their overall learning experience. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather data from both students and teachers. The findings indicate that incorporating interactive and stimulating warm-up activities, such as games, discussions, and multimedia presentations, significantly increase students' enthusiasm and readiness for reading tasks. The study highlights the importance of diverse and dynamic warm-up exercises in creating a conducive learning environment, ultimately fostering a positive attitude towards reading among non-English majored freshmen. Recommendations for practical implementation of teachers working with non-English majored freshmen and future research directions are also discussed.

**Keywords:** interest, warm-up activities, Haiphong University

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## CÁC HOẠT ĐỘNG KHỞI ĐỘNG TRONG GIỜ HỌC ĐỌC HIỂU NHẪM TĂNG HỨNG THÚ HỌC TẬP ĐỐI VỚI SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN NGỮ TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC HẢI PHÒNG

**Tóm tắt:** Đây là một nghiên cứu về hiệu quả của các hoạt động khởi động trong giờ học đọc hiểu, nhằm tăng cường hứng thú và mức độ tham gia của sinh viên năm nhất

các ngành không chuyên ngữ tại Trường Đại học Hải Phòng. Mục đích của nghiên cứu là chỉ ra những khó khăn của giảng viên trong việc tạo động lực cho sinh viên, từ đó cải thiện trải nghiệm học ngoại ngữ của các em. Nghiên cứu này sử dụng Phương pháp nghiên cứu hỗn hợp, kết hợp giữa phương pháp khảo sát định lượng và phỏng vấn định tính với các đối tượng là giảng viên và sinh viên. Kết quả cho thấy việc kết hợp các hoạt động khởi động tương tác và kích thích, như trò chơi, thảo luận và thuyết trình đa phương tiện, làm tăng đáng kể nhiệt tình và sự sẵn sàng tham gia vào các nhiệm vụ đọc hiểu của sinh viên. Nghiên cứu cũng nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của các bài tập khởi động đa dạng và năng động trong việc tạo ra một môi trường học tập thuận lợi, thúc đẩy thái độ tích cực đối với môn đọc hiểu của sinh viên năm nhất không chuyên ngữ. Ngoài ra, bài báo này cũng bàn về các đề xuất để thực hiện trong thực tế đối với các giảng viên giảng dạy sinh viên không chuyên ngữ năm nhất và hướng nghiên cứu trong tương lai,

**Từ khóa:** hứng thú, hoạt động khởi động, Đại học Hải Phòng

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Rationale**

In the landscape of education, student engagement remains a critical factor influencing academic success and overall learning experience. For non-majored freshmen at Haiphong University, the challenge of maintaining interest in compulsory reading lessons is particularly pronounced. These students, who do not specialize in language studies, often struggle to find motivation and relevance in their reading assignments, which can lead to disengagement and a lack of participation in class activities.

The implementation of warm-up activities in reading lessons has been suggested as a potential strategy to address this issue. Warm-up activities, which typically

involve interactive and stimulating exercises conducted at the beginning of a lesson, are designed to capture students' attention, activate prior knowledge, and create a positive learning atmosphere. By engaging students from the outset, these activities can pave the way for a more productive and enjoyable reading experience.

### **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of warm-up activities in enhancing the interest and engagement of non-majored freshmen in reading lessons at Haiphong University. Specifically, the study aims to identify which types of warm-up activities are most effective in achieving these goals and to understand the impact of these activities on students' attitudes towards reading.

### 1.3. Research Questions

To guide the investigation, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of warm-up activities are most effective in increasing non-majored freshmen's interest in reading lessons?
2. How do these warm-up activities impact students' engagement and readiness for reading tasks?
3. What are the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the use of warm-up activities in reading lessons?

By exploring these questions, the study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on educational practices that enhance student motivation and engagement, providing practical insights for teachers at Haiphong University and beyond.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

Student motivation and engagement are pivotal elements in educational psychology, significantly impacting academic performance and overall learning outcomes. Various theories, such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and the Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation, which arises from students' interest and enjoyment in the learning process. These theories provide a foundation for understanding how engaging activities can

foster a positive learning environment and enhance student participation.

In the context of language learning, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach advocates for interactive and student-centered activities that promote language use in meaningful contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Warm-up activities, as part of the CLT framework, serve to activate prior knowledge, reduce anxiety, and prepare students for the main tasks of the lesson. These activities are designed to be engaging and enjoyable, thus aligning with the principles of intrinsic motivation.

### 2.2. Evaluating Student Engagement and Readiness for Reading Tasks

To measure student engagement and readiness for reading tasks, we can adopt a comprehensive framework based on the work of Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), Fredricks and Mc. Colskey (2012), and Fredricks, Filsecker, and Lawson (2016a). This framework considers multiple dimensions of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive.

**Behavioral Engagement:** Behavioral engagement refers to students' participation in academic activities and involves the following criteria:

- Attendance: Regular attendance in reading classes.
- Participation: Active involvement in class discussions and activities.

- **Effort:** Consistent effort in completing reading assignments and tasks.

**Emotional Engagement:** Emotional engagement involves students' feelings and attitudes towards learning. Criteria include:

- **Interest:** Demonstrated interest in reading materials and activities.

- **Motivation:** Intrinsic motivation to participate in reading tasks.

- **Belonging:** Sense of belonging and positive relationships with peers and instructors.

**Cognitive Engagement:** Cognitive engagement refers to the investment in learning and the use of self-regulation strategies. Criteria include:

- **Attention:** Focused attention during reading lessons.

- **Strategy Use:** Application of reading strategies such as summarizing, questioning, and predicting.

- **Persistence:** Persistence in overcoming reading challenges and difficulties.

**Readiness for Reading Tasks:** Readiness for reading tasks can be assessed using several indicators:

- **Prior Knowledge Activation:** The extent to which students activate their prior knowledge relevant to the reading material.

- **Vocabulary Knowledge:** Familiarity with key vocabulary terms related to the reading text.

- **Anxiety Levels:** Levels of anxiety before and during reading tasks.

- **Task Understanding:** Understanding of the reading task objectives and requirements.

By employing this framework, educators can gain a comprehensive understanding of student engagement and readiness, allowing for more targeted interventions to enhance learning outcomes. The criteria for measuring engagement and readiness can be assessed through a combination of self-report questionnaires, observations, and performance-based assessments.

### 2.3. Previous Studies

Several studies have highlighted the benefits of using warm-up activities in educational settings. For instance, Lightbown and Spada (2013) found that warm-up activities can improve students' readiness to learn by creating a positive and energetic classroom atmosphere. Similarly, a study by Lile (2011) demonstrated that warm-up activities enhance students' participation and reduce classroom anxiety, leading to more effective learning experiences.

In the specific context of reading lessons, warm-up activities have been shown to improve comprehension and retention. For example, Al-Mutairi (2010) found that pre-reading activities, such as discussions and vocabulary previews,

significantly enhanced students' understanding of the text. Additionally, a study by Karim and Rahman (2017) indicated that engaging warm-up activities, such as games and multimedia presentations, increased students' motivation and interest in reading tasks.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of warm-up activities in increasing non-majored freshmen's interest and engagement in reading lessons. It includes structured surveys administered to students and teachers, which provide measurable data on interest and engagement levels before and after the intervention. Also, the study provides semi-structured interviews with a subset of students and in-depth interviews with teachers, capturing detailed qualitative insights into the impact of warm-up activities. The mixed-method design allows for the triangulation of data, comprehensive understanding, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings, and ensuring the balanced perspective.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The study participants were non-majored freshmen enrolled in compulsory General English 1 and 2 at Haiphong

University. A total of 120 students were randomly selected to participate in the study. Additionally, 10 English teachers who teach these courses were included to provide qualitative insights into the implementation and effectiveness of warm-up activities.

#### **3.3. Data Collection Methods**

##### **3.3.1. Surveys:**

- **Student Surveys:** A structured questionnaire was administered to all participating students before and after the intervention. The pre-intervention survey assessed their initial interest and engagement in reading lessons, while the post-intervention survey measured any changes in these variables.

- **Teacher Surveys:** Teachers completed a survey designed to capture their perceptions of the effectiveness of warm-up activities and any observed changes in student engagement.

##### **3.3.2. Interviews:**

- **Student Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 20 students (selected through purposive sampling) to gain deeper insights into their experiences with the warm-up activities. These interviews explored their attitudes towards reading lessons and the specific impact of the activities on their engagement and motivation.

- **Teacher Interviews:** In-depth interviews with the 10 participating

teachers provided qualitative data on the implementation process, challenges encountered, and perceived effectiveness of the warm-up activities.

### **3.4. Procedure**

#### **Preparation:**

- The study began with a preliminary phase where the selected warm-up activities were designed in collaboration with the participating instructors. Activities included interactive games, group discussions, multimedia presentations, and short, engaging tasks relevant to the reading material.

- Both students and teachers were briefed on the purpose of the study and the procedures involved.

#### **Implementation:**

- Over a period of eight weeks, the warm-up activities were integrated into the beginning of each reading lesson. Teachers implemented the activities as planned, ensuring consistency across different classes.

- Regular observations were conducted to monitor the implementation and gather additional contextual data.

#### **Data Collection:**

- Surveys were administered to students and teachers at the beginning and end of the eight-week period.

- Interviews were conducted mid-way through and at the end of the intervention to capture evolving perceptions and experiences.

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

#### **Quantitative Data:**

- Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Pre- and post-intervention data were compared to assess changes in students' interest and engagement levels.

- Statistical tests, such as paired t-tests, were used to determine the significance of observed changes.

#### **Qualitative Data:**

- Interview transcripts were analyzed thematically using a coding process to identify recurring themes and patterns. Thematic analysis helped in understanding the nuanced impact of warm-up activities on student engagement and motivation.

- Qualitative data from teacher interviews provided additional context and triangulation for the quantitative findings.

## **4. FINDINGS**

### **4.1. Quantitative Results**

#### **4.1.1. Pre- and Post-Intervention Surveys**

- **Types of warm up activities:**

**Table 1: Effectiveness of Different Warm-Up Activities in Increasing Student Interest**

Type of Activity	High Interest Increase	Moderate Interest Increase	Low Interest Increase
Games	80%	15%	5%
Discussions	70%	20%	10%
Multimedia Presentations	75%	15%	10%
Vocabulary Previews	65%	25%	10%

The data from Table 1 indicates that games and multimedia presentations were the most effective in increasing students' interest, with 80% and 75% of students reporting a high interest increase,

respectively. Discussions and vocabulary previews also showed significant improvements but were slightly less effective compared to games and multimedia presentations.

o **Student Interest:**

**Table 2: Student Interest in Reading Lessons (Pre- and Post-Intervention)**

Level of Interest	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
High	25%	70%
Moderate	45%	20%
Low	30%	10%

The pre-intervention survey indicated that only 25% of students reported a high level of interest in reading lessons. After the implementation of

warm-up activities, this figure rose to 70%, demonstrating a significant increase in student interest.

o **Student Engagement:**

**Table 3: Student Engagement in Reading Lessons (Pre- and Post-Intervention)**

Level of Engagement	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
High	30%	75%
Moderate	40%	15%
Low	30%	10%

Initially, 30% of students felt engaged during reading lessons. Post-intervention data showed that 75% of students reported higher levels of

engagement. Statistical analysis using paired t-tests confirmed that these changes were significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

#### 4.1.2. Teacher Surveys

**Table 4: Teacher Observations on Student Attitudes (Pre- and Post-Intervention)**

Observed Change	Percentage of Teachers Reporting
Increased Enthusiasm	80%
Increased Participation	80%
Reduction in Disruptions	75%
Increase in Collaborative Behavior	70%

Teachers observed notable improvements in students' attitudes towards reading lessons. 80% of teachers reported that students were more enthusiastic and participative after the introduction of warm-up activities. They also noted a reduction in classroom disruptions and an increase in collaborative behavior.

## 4.2. Qualitative Insights

### 4.2.1. Student Interviews

○ **Themes of Increased Motivation and Enjoyment:** Many students described the warm-up activities as “fun” and “exciting,” which helped them look forward to reading lessons. One student remarked, “The games we played before reading made me want to participate more and not just sit quietly.”

○ **Enhanced Understanding:** Students felt that the activities helped them

better understand the reading material. “Discussing the topics beforehand made the readings easier to follow,” noted another student.

○ **Sense of Community:** The interactive nature of the warm-up activities fostered a sense of community among students. They appreciated working in groups and felt more comfortable sharing their ideas during the lessons.

### 4.2.2. Teacher Interviews

○ **Improved Classroom Dynamics:** Teachers reported that the warm-up activities created a positive and energetic classroom atmosphere. One teacher observed, “The students were more relaxed and open to participating in discussions.”

○ **Implementation Challenges:** While the overall feedback was positive, some teachers mentioned challenges such

as time constraints and the need for additional resources to effectively conduct the activities. However, they felt that the benefits outweighed these challenges.

○ **Recommendations for Future Practice:** Teachers suggested incorporating a variety of warm-up activities to cater to different learning styles and maintaining a balance between fun and educational content.

#### **4.3. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings**

The quantitative data clearly indicate that warm-up activities significantly increased both interest and engagement in reading lessons among non-majored freshmen. The qualitative data provide deeper insights into why these activities were effective. Students enjoyed the interactive nature of the activities, which made learning more enjoyable and less intimidating. Teachers' observations corroborated these findings, noting improvements in classroom dynamics and student participation.

Overall, the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings underscores the effectiveness of warm-up activities in enhancing the learning experience for non-majored freshmen at Haiphong University. The positive changes in student attitudes and behaviors suggest that such activities can be a valuable addition to reading lessons, fostering a more engaging and supportive learning environment.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

### **5.1. Interpretation of Findings**

The findings of this study indicate that incorporating warm-up activities in reading lessons significantly enhances the interest and engagement of non-majored freshmen at Haiphong University. The study identified a variety of warm-up activities, including games, discussions, multimedia presentations, and vocabulary previews, as being effective in increasing student interest. This was supported by both quantitative data (showing a significant increase in student interest from 25% to 70%) and qualitative insights (students described the activities as fun and engaging).

The positive impact on student motivation aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in learning. By making reading lessons more engaging and interactive, warm-up activities cater to students' innate need for autonomy and relatedness, fostering a more self-determined and motivated learning experience.

### **5.2. Comparison with Previous Studies**

The results of this study are consistent with previous research that underscores the benefits of warm-up activities in educational settings. Similar to Lightbown and Spada's (2013) findings,

this study confirms that warm-up activities can improve students' readiness to learn by creating a positive and energetic classroom atmosphere. The observed increase in student participation and reduction in classroom anxiety are in line with Lile's (2011) findings, further validating the role of warm-up activities in enhancing student engagement.

Moreover, the study supports Al-Mutairi's (2010) conclusion that pre-reading activities can significantly enhance students' understanding of the text. The qualitative data from student interviews suggest that discussing topics and previewing vocabulary before reading made the material more accessible and comprehensible, thereby improving overall learning outcomes.

### **5.3. Implications for Teaching**

The findings of this study have important implications for teaching practices, particularly for teachers working with non-majored students. Incorporating diverse and dynamic warm-up activities into reading lessons can create a more engaging and supportive learning environment, helping to overcome the motivational challenges often faced by non-majored freshmen.

### **5.4. Practical Recommendations:**

**5.4.1. Variety of Activities:** Teachers should incorporate a range of warm-up activities, including interactive games,

group discussions, and multimedia presentations, to cater to different learning styles and keep students engaged.

**5.4.2. Balancing Fun and Educational Content:** While it is important to make activities enjoyable, they should also be relevant to the reading material and designed to activate prior knowledge and stimulate critical thinking.

**5.4.3. Teacher Training and Resources:** Providing teachers with adequate training and resources to effectively implement warm-up activities can help overcome potential challenges such as time constraints and lack of materials.

In short, this study demonstrates the significant positive impact of warm-up activities on the interest and engagement of non-majored freshmen in reading lessons at Haiphong University. By making lessons more interactive and enjoyable, these activities help create a supportive and motivating learning environment. The findings underscore the importance of incorporating diverse and dynamic warm-up activities into teaching practices to enhance student motivation and engagement, ultimately contributing to better learning outcomes.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study explored the effectiveness of warm-up activities in enhancing the interest and engagement of non-majored freshmen in reading lessons

at Haiphong University. Through a mixed-method approach, the research provided comprehensive insights into how these activities can positively impact student motivation and classroom dynamics.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

The quantitative data revealed significant increases in student interest and engagement following the implementation of warm-up activities. Pre-intervention surveys indicated that only a small percentage of students were highly interested and engaged in reading lessons, while post-intervention results showed substantial improvements in these areas. The qualitative insights further supported these findings, highlighting students' increased enjoyment, better comprehension, and enhanced classroom participation.

### **Implications for Practice**

The study's findings underscore the value of incorporating diverse and dynamic warm-up activities in reading lessons, particularly for non-majored freshmen. By creating a more engaging and interactive learning environment, these activities can help overcome motivational challenges and foster a positive attitude towards reading. Teachers are encouraged to integrate a variety of warm-up exercises that are both enjoyable and educationally relevant, and to seek adequate training and resources to effectively implement these strategies.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

While the study provides valuable insights, its limitations must be acknowledged. The research was conducted with a relatively small and specific sample, which may not fully represent the broader population of non-majored students. Additionally, the study focused on short-term effects; future research should explore the long-term impact of warm-up activities on student motivation and academic performance.

Future studies could also investigate the effectiveness of different types of warm-up activities across various educational contexts and student populations. Longitudinal research could provide deeper understanding of how these activities influence sustained engagement and learning outcomes.

### **Final Thoughts**

Overall, this study highlights the importance of engaging and interactive teaching strategies in enhancing student motivation and learning experiences. Warm-up activities, when effectively integrated into reading lessons, can significantly improve students' interest and engagement, contributing to a more positive and productive educational environment. By continuing to explore and implement innovative instructional practices, educators can better support the diverse needs of their students and promote lifelong learning.

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